

Introduction, Legal Education and Legal Reform in South Asia

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On January 6, 2013, the AALS Section on Graduate Programs for Non-US Lawyers and the Section on Law and South Asian Studies presented a joint panel on the topic of “Legal Education and Legal Reform in South Asia.” The result is the following three papers that explore the various dimensions of legal education in Pakistan and India. The fourth piece, on Thailand, offers comparative insights from a neighboring country. This unique symposium is valuable both for scholars who are developing a comparative perspective on legal education and for law school administrators who are involved with overseas legal education programs.

These papers address many of the issues confronting legal education globally. Professor Osama Siddique’s article draws on Max Weber’s distinction between legal education as craft and legal education as science. The first emphasizes transmitting practical legal skills through practitioners; the second, understanding legal doctrines and institutions in a systematic way. Professor Siddique argues that legal reform in Pakistan has suffered from an overemphasis on law as craft with the result that education has been monopolized by the entrenched bar. He suggests that India might offer an alternative model of legal education. The articles by Professor Priya Gupta (with her co-authors, Kudrat Dev, Meher Dev and Kirti Rana) and Professor Deepa Badrinarayana present the case for the Indian model. Professor Gupta describes the growth of the new Jindal Law School, especially the development of clinical legal education. Professor Badrinarayana shares her experiences at the National Law School University of India in Bangalore, established in the late 1980’s by the Indian government as part of a network of national law schools to reshape legal education. Finally, Professor Lisa Bliss’ article offers perspectives from Thailand as a U.S. academic working to develop overseas legal education programs.

As we rethink legal education in the United States, overseas programs and graduate programs for non-U.S. lawyers provide models for expanding

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options. But beyond that goal, the authors represented in this symposium have sparked a scholarly debate about how what happens in law schools can shape the legal environment and institutions in which the producers and consumers of legal services thrive.